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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire survey of all colleges and universities in the United States, to which 1,269 institutions (45%) responded, yielded findings about the academic preparation of incoming undergraduate students and the ways in which their deficiencies are being remediated. First, 85 percent of the responding institutions perceive poor academic preparation of incoming students to be either very much a problem or somewhat of a problem. Second, 28 percent of entering students are perceived as needing assistance in reading, 31 percent in writing, and 32 percent in mathematics. Third, 97 percent of the responding institution assess the skills levels of entering students. Fourth, the overwhelming majority of institutions offer courses in the basic skills--more than eight out of ten offer reading and math courses, and more than nine out of ten offer writing courses. Fifth, while tests are the most common method for placement in basic skills courses, there is little agreement on specific tests. And sixth, in the vast majority of institutions, decisions concerning exit from basic skills courses are left to individual faculty members. Four appendices contain a sample questionnaire and letter sent out to college presidents, information on representativeness of the sample and inter-coder reliability, and additional data from the study in tabular form. (CMG)

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Research Monograph Series
Report No. 5

# ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE ACADEMIC SKILLS OF ENTERING FRESHMEN: A NATIONAL SURVEY

September 1983

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## SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

On the basis of a survey of all colleges and universities in the country to which 1,269 institutions responded, we can now make the following statements about institutional perceptions of the basic skills preparation of entering freshmen, the extent to which students in various types of institutions are being diagnosed as needing help in basic skills, and the ways in which colleges and universities across the country are choosing to respond to the needs of students they determine to be underprepared:

- A full 85% of the responding institutions perceive poor academic preparation of incoming freshmen to be either very much of a problem or somewhat of a problem. Only 3% of the institutions do not perceive poor academic preparation to be a problem.

- A substantial percentage of entering freshmen are viewed as requiring assistance in the basic skills areas -- 28% in reading, 31% in basic writing, and 32% in basic mathematics.

- 97% of the responding institutions assess the skills levels of entering freshmen, and only 2% percent of the institutions feel that assessment is unnecessary.

- The overwhelming majority of institutions offer courses in the basic skills areas. More than eight out of ten of the institutions offer reading and basic mathematics courses; more than nine out of ten institutions offer basic writing courses.

- While tests are the most common method for placement into basic skills courses, there is little agreement on specific tests. The most common method of placement into basic writing and basic mathematics courses is through locally developed tests.

- Although institutions use tests to assess skills levels of students and to place them in courses, in the vast majority of institutions, decisions concerning exit from basic skills courses are left to the academic judgment of individual faculty members.

## INTRODUCTION

College educators have been concerned about the preparation of students entering higher education since the early 1970's when a number of historic forces coalesced, leaving us with little certainty of the skills possessed by freshmen entering American colleges and universities. Among these forces was the entry of large numbers of students for whom college access had been previously denied. In the past two decades, the changing nature of the American family left many children unsupervised -- largely on their own and outside of a traditional learning environment -- during large parts of their childhood and adolescence. One may speculate, too, about the significance of a range of other forces, including the legacy of the sixties which, in an attempt to change fossilized curricula from kindergarten through graduate school, resulted not only in much needed experimentation and reform but also in what appears to be a systematic lowering of academic expectations for students. Today, more and more, students passively receive entertainment and information about the world from either a television screen or telephone receiver rather than from active involvement with the printed or written word. These forces have radically altered student performance in classrooms; other forces have no less radically altered the performance of their teachers.

The widening of opportunities for women in our society has left the teaching profession from kindergarten through high school with a depleted number of gifted women willing to work in a low-prestige field for a relatively low salary. While other professions such as medicine and law also appear to have fallen in the public esteem, these continue to be relatively

lucrative fields; teaching, however, is neither highly esteemed nor highly paid. It is little wonder, then, that fewer women or men now aspire to teaching. A report issued by the American Council on Education and the University of California at Los Angeles indicates that whereas in 1966 approximately 22% of the entering freshmen in America were planning to teach at the elementary or secondary levels, less than 5% of the Fall 1982 entering freshmen had teaching aspirations.[1] Dr. Alexander Astin, who directed the study, commented, "It appears that we are heading for a crisis not only in the quantity but also in the quality of persons who want to teach in elementary and secondary schools."[2] This presents a serious problem not only for the present but for the future as well.

The present state of education in America is suddenly receiving a great deal of national attention. "All At Once Everyone Is Worried About Schools," reads the caption in a recent New York Times article which details the findings of the National Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, the National Commission on Excellence in Education, and a task force of the Twentieth Century Fund.[3] In the news too is the 1982 survey of mathematics by the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) which indicates that while students are improving in basic mathematical skills, they are doing poorly in higher-order skills.[4] A similar

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1 Alexander W. Astin, Margo King Hemond, and Gerald T. Richardson, The American Freshman: National Norms For Fall 1982 (Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute Graduate School of Education University of California, 1982).

2 Gene I. Maeroff, "Study Finds Fewer Freshmen In College Look to Teaching," The New York Times, 9 February 1983, 28.

3 Edward B. Fiske, "All At Once Everyone Is Worried About Schools," The New York Times, 8 May 1983, 18E.

4

finding was reported in 1981 in the NAEP report called Reading, Thinking and Writing, which concluded that while seventeen-year-olds nationwide can read at a literal level, they have difficulty in making inferences and in reading and writing critically.[5] Some months ago, the College Board issued a report entitled Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do.[6] This report is important because it focuses not on courses or units of credit students should take in high school but on competencies high school graduates should possess for success in college.

At The City University of New York (CUNY), we have been actively involved in the education of academically and educationally disadvantaged students since the mid-1960's when special opportunity programs were first designed and implemented. Since 1970, CUNY's policy of Open Admissions has brought large numbers of underprepared college students into the University. In 1976, in response to increasing concern about students' skills, CUNY's Board of Trustees mandated a minimum competency testing program, the Freshman Skills Assessment Program; this program has been in place since the fall of 1978.

As we worked at CUNY to improve the skills of our students, we were

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[4] Gene I. Maeroff, "Pupils Show Gains in Easy Arithmetic," The New York Times, 14 April 1983, 21A.

[5] A. Applebee, et al., Reading, Thinking, and Writing: Results from the 1979-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature (Denver: The National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1981).

[6] Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do (New York: The College Board, 1983).

reading these headlines in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Chronicle of Higher Education: "Scholars Increasingly Concerned About 'Deterioriation of Literacy,'" "Employers Take Over Where Schools Fail to Teach the Basics," "Competency Exams Test Schools as Well as Pupils," and "The End of a Dream: Literacy Invades the Middle Class." We read about actions taken by other colleges, universities, and state education systems which indicated similar concerns about the skills of their students. As far as we could tell, however, up to 1981 no systematic survey had been conducted to ascertain the pervasiveness of the problem of skills levels of entering freshmen in colleges and universities across the country. We decided to do such a survey, and this monograph reports our findings.

The most dramatic finding of the survey is that only three percent of the responding institutions perceive the skills levels of their entering freshmen to be not a problem at all. This is especially striking in view of the fact that the sample includes close to half of all colleges and universities in the country which offer undergraduate programs and is, in fact, representative of that population. While it would have been impossible for us to assess the basic skills levels of students across the country with a common instrument, we were able to ask about institutional perceptions of the basic skills preparation of entering freshmen, the extent to which students in various types of institutions are being diagnosed as needing help in basic skills, and the ways in which colleges and universities across the country are choosing to respond to the needs of students they determine to be unprepared.

This study, then, provides further empirical documentation to the recent national studies and reports indicating that this country is at an educational crossroad. As educators, we must decide on a direction and work together to follow that route -- or we may be forced to travel a road chosen for us by others which may lead us nowhere near our desired destination. The choice of road cannot be governed solely by economic considerations, although these are necessarily important. It is all too easy to seek the solution simply by tightening high school graduation requirements and raising college admission standards. But these steps alone will not solve more fundamental educational problems. On the contrary, they may only serve, once again, to limit access to higher education.

We must attack the fundamental problems. We must commit our resources and imaginations to working together on all educational levels so that more children are comfortable and productive in school, remain in school, and, as young adults, enter college or the labor force with the skills and enthusiasm needed to succeed in both. We are riding on one carousel, and if we are serious about giving everyone on it an equal chance for the brass rings, we must provide equality of educational opportunity earlier in children's lives, we must provide them with excellent teachers, and we must make education from their earliest years through graduate school exciting, meaningful, and challenging.

## METHODOLOGY

In the Spring of 1981, the Office of Academic Affairs of The City University of New York sent a questionnaire to each of the approximately 2,800 institutions of higher education in the United States which admit first year undergraduate students. (See Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire.) The population was based on the institutions of higher education listed in the Education Directory, Colleges and Universities 1979-80.[7] Because we needed institutional information to address the issues of this study, we decided that the college or university president would be the most appropriate person to receive the questionnaire and determine who should provide this information for the institution. In addition, we sent a letter to the head of the education department in each state, requesting that the education department encourage responses to our questionnaire.

Forty-five percent (1,269) of the institutions responded to the questionnaire. Our high response rate may have been due to a number of factors: the questionnaire was short and consisted of primarily close-ended items, we sent two mailings of the questionnaire,[8] and institutions themselves may have wanted to know the information which we promised to provide each responding institution.

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[7] Education Directory, Colleges and Universities 1979-80 (Washington, D.C.: The National Center for Educational Statistics, 1980).

[8] The first mailing, which we sent in April 1981, yielded a 30% response rate. The second mailing, which we sent in August 1981 to the institutions which had not responded to the first mailing, increased the response rate by 15% to 45%.

We are confident that the findings of the survey are representative of colleges and universities nationwide. The institutions in the sample are remarkably similar to the institutions in the population in terms of type of control (public versus private), level (two-year versus four-year), selectivity of admissions criteria, enrollment and geographical location.[9] (See Appendix B for the complete study of the representativeness of the sample.) An analysis of inter-coder reliability indicated that there was a high degree of consistency in the coding of items. There was a 97% rate of agreement on the coding of close-ended items, an 88% rate of agreement on open-ended items, and a 98% rate of agreement on other questions. (Appendix C contains the complete study of inter-coder reliability.)

In most cases, we examine the patterns of responses by the type of institution[10] and by institutional perceptions of the extent to which poor academic preparation is a problem among entering students. The type of institution is based on three criteria:[11] 1) control of the institution, 2) level of the institution, and 3) selectivity of admissions criteria. Control is divided into the categories of public and private. Level is divided into

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[9] These institutional characteristics, particularly control and level, are commonly used to classify institutions in research and statistical reports. For example, Alexander Astin, Minorities in American Education: Recent Trends, Current Prospects, and Recommendations (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1982) uses the criteria of control and level for categorizing institutions of higher education.

[10] The type of institution is based on three of the criteria used to compare the sample and population institutions. Accordingly, it is analogous to commonly used typologies. See Astin above.

[11] The variable of selectivity of admissions was extracted from the computer tape of the Education Directory, Colleges and Universities 1979-80 (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Statistics, 1980).

the three categories of university, four-year, and two-year institutions. Selectivity of admissions criteria is divided into the three levels of selective, require a high school diploma, and open admissions. Although the type of institution has eighteen possible categories, we consider only nine:

private universities
public universities
private four-year selective institutions
public four-year selective institutions
private four-year institutions requiring only a high school diploma
public four-year institutions requiring only a high school diploma
private two-year institutions requiring only a high school diploma
public two-year institutions requiring only a high school diploma
public two-year institutions with open admissions

We restrict the analysis to these nine types of institutions because the remaining possibilities do not contain an adequate number of institutions.

Institutional perceptions of the extent to which poor academic preparation is a problem among entering freshmen is based on a question asked of college officials (item 8 on the survey questionnaire). The response options range from very much of a problem to no problem at all. We recognize that the actual level of skills of students at the various institutions will differ, but we feel that the more critical factor influencing the provision of basic skills instruction and services is the institutional perception of the skills level of students.

## SURVEY RESULTS

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

The institutional perceptions of the need for basic skills instruction and services and responses tc the need can be better understood if we first look at the characteristics of the responding institutions. Our sample is representative of the population; therefore, these characteristics can be generalized to all institutions of higher education in the United States. What types of institutions are there? How large are these institutions? What are the characteristics of the students they serve?

The majority of the institutions are four-year colleges or universities (Table 1). In addition, there are more non-selective than selective institutions. The most common type of institution is the private four-year college which requires a high school diploma (26%), followed by public two-year colleges requiring a high school diploma (18%), and public two-year institutions with open admissions (16%).

The average size of the incoming class is larger at public institutions than at private institutions (Table 2). Among both public and private institutions, the entering classes of universities tend to be considerably larger than those at two and four-year colleges.

Table 1

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDING INSTITUTIONS BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION[a]

| Type of Institution | N | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Private University | 29 | 2.6% |
| Public University | 52 | 4.6 |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 95 | 8.5 |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 34 | 3.0 |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 289 | 25.8 |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 157 | 14.0 |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 76 | 6.8 |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 206 | 18.4 |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 183 | 16.3 |
| Total | 1121 | 100.0% |

[a]There are two major reasons why there are fewer than 1,269 institutions in this table. First, we omitted categories of type of institution which contained fewer than 20 institutions. Second, only those institutions for which we had data on level, control, and selectivity of admissions criteria could be placed in categories of type of institution.

Table 2

SIZE OF FRESHMAN CLASS BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | N | Mean Size |
|---|---|---|
| Private University | 29 | 1421 (995)[a] |
| Public University | 52 | 3148 (1268) |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 91 | 406 (259) |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 34 | 1556 (1174) |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 286 | 354 (386) |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 156 | 1220 (1110) |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 75 | 340 (487) |
| Public 2 Year High School | 204 | 1425 (2301) |
| Public 2 Year Open Admissions | 179 | 2358 (2663) |
| Total | 1106 | 1198 (1785) |

[a]The number in parentheses is the standard deviation.

A composite of the demographic characteristics of race, age, and residence patterns of a typical incoming class suggests the extent to which the student body at each type of institution tends to conform with or deviate from what is generally considered the image of the traditional college freshman -- white, young, and living on campus. The image is accurate for race because the majority of entering freshmen are white (more than three fourths), regardless of the type of institution. In contrast, there is greater variation in age and residence patterns. The percentage of entering freshmen who are eighteen years old or less ranges from 24% at public two-year institutions with open admissions to 91% at private universities, and the percentage of students living on campus varies from 12% at public two-year institutions with open admissions to 80% at private four-year selective institutions (Table 3).

Overall, the freshman classes of private institutions have higher percentages of white, young freshmen living on campus; the exception is private two-year colleges which have a slightly lower percentage of white students than public institutions. The characteristics of the freshman classes suggest a pattern of public institutions having larger student bodies with larger percentages of their students coming from groups not typically thought of as the traditional college student. Public two-year institutions are distinct in that the student bodies of these institutions tend to be larger and have higher percentages of older students who commute. These patterns in the student demographic characteristics of the different types of institutions may well be the result of differential admissions criteria and costs of attendance (tuition as well as the incremental costs associated with attending a residential college).

Table 3

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FRESHMAN CLASS[a] BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | ≤18 Years Old | | White | | Living on Campus | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N[b] | Mean % | N[b] | Mean % | N[b] | Mean % |
| Private University | 22 | 91.3% | 27 | 86.6% | 28 | 74.5% |
| Public University | 47 | 65.0 | 51 | 85.6 | 49 | 72.4 |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 88 | 81.3 | 94 | 86.4 | 94 | 80.1 |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 32 | 67.7 | 31 | 78.7 | 33 | 57.2 |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 266 | 66.9 | 283 | 79.8 | 285 | 63.2 |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 140 | 61.6 | 153 | 74.7 | 150 | 52.6 |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 76 | 58.4 | 75 | 75.6 | 74 | 49.9 |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 185 | 39.0 | 199 | 79.6 | 199 | 16.4 |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 186 | 24.0 | 175 | 79.4 | 178 | 11.8 |
| Total | 1024 | 55.2% | 1088 | 80.0% | 1090 | 45.9% |

[a]For more complete demographic information, see Tables D-1 and D-2 in Appendix D.

[b]The number of institutions varies across categories because not all institutions responded to all portions of the question.

With a sense of the nature of the responding institutions, we may now turn to the perceptions of need for basic skills instruction and services, assessment procedures, the courses and services offered in the basic skills, and procedures for placement into and exit from basic skills courses in these institutions.

## PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC PREPARATION

A full 85% of the institutions perceive poor academic preparation among entering freshmen to be very much of a problem or somewhat of a problem -- only 3% of the institutions said that it was not a problem (Table 4). While perceptions of both the existence and severity of a problem are always embedded in expectations and standards, these percentages illustrate a problem in postsecondary institutions nationwide.

As one would expect, however, perceptions of the extent of the problem vary by the type of institution and are consistent with the nature of the student body they serve. While more than 90% of the two-year colleges, the institutions serving the bulk of the nontraditional student population, perceived poor academic preparation to be either very much of a problem or somewhat of problem, 45% of the private universities and 62% of the private four-year selective colleges also expressed this concern. The more closely the incoming class approximates a traditional one, the less likely the institution is to perceive student need for assistance in the basic skills. Private universities, which tend to serve a traditional college student, were most likely to say that poor academic preparation is not a problem followed by private, four-year, selective colleges.

Table 4

PERCEIVED EXTENT OF PROBLEM WITH POOR ACADEMIC PREPARATION AMONG ENTERING FRESHMEN BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | N | Perceived Extent of Problem[a] | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Very Much of a Problem | Somewhat of a Problem | Not Much of a Problem | Not a Problem at all |
| Private University | 29 | 6.9% | 37.9% | 34.5% | 20.7% |
| Public University | 48 | 20.8 | 52.1 | 20.8 | 6.3 |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 95 | 11.6 | 50.5 | 26.3 | 11.6 |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 32 | 15.6 | 71.9 | 9.4 | 3.1 |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 285 | 23.9 | 59.6 | 14.4 | 2.1 |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 155 | 35.5 | 56.1 | 6.5 | 1.9 |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 73 | 46.6 | 43.8 | 5.5 | 4.1 |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 203 | 41.4 | 49.8 | 7.9 | 1.0 |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 182 | 46.2 | 50.0 | 2.7 | 1.1 |
| Total | 1102 | 32.0% | 53.4% | 11.3% | 3.4% |

[a]In all subsequent tables "Perceived Extent of Problem with Poor Academic Preparation Among Entering Freshmen" will be referred to as "Perceived Extent of Problem."

We were startled, however, to find that only one out of five of the private universities and one out of ten of the private four-year selective colleges do not find poor academic preparation of entering freshmen to be a problem.

A substantial percentage of all entering freshmen are viewed as requiring assistance in the basic skills areas -- 28% in reading, 31% in basic writing, and 32% in basic mathematics (Table 5). Again consistent with the demographic characteristics of the student populations served by the different types of institutions, the percentages of students viewed as requiring help in each of the skills areas vary considerably by the type of institution. The more selective institutions, serving a larger proportion of traditional students, indicated that fewer students require assistance in the basic skills areas than the institutions which serve a larger proportion of the nontraditional students. This pattern is further evidenced by the percentage of each type of institution which says that 10% or less of the entering freshman class requires help in each of the basic skills areas (see Table D-3 in Appendix D).

## METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

Do institutions assess the academic skills levels of entering freshmen and, if they do, in what ways? Most of the responding colleges and universities do assess the skills levels of their students. Less than 2% of the responding institutions indicated that assessment is unnecessary.

Table 5

PERCENTAGE OF ENTERING FRESHMAN CLASS REQUIRING HELP IN BASIC SKILLS AREAS[a] BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | Reading | | Basic Writing | | Basic Mathematics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Mean % | N | Mean % | N | Mean % |
| Private University | 20 | 7.7% | 20 | 12.1% | 17 | 14.7% |
| Public University | 37 | 16.3 | 43 | 22.8 | 44 | 23.5 |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 62 | 15.3 | 78 | 23.9 | 65 | 21.2 |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 23 | 18.7 | 32 | 29.9 | 25 | 26.2 |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 230 | 25.5 | 251 | 30.6 | 224 | 28.0 |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 135 | 30.1 | 140 | 32.8 | 138 | 34.9 |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 65 | 28.1 | 66 | 29.2 | 68 | 32.3 |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 190 | 32.3 | 190 | 33.1 | 191 | 36.8 |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 153 | 34.0 | 145 | 35.8 | 149 | 37.6 |
| Total | 915 | 27.6% | 965 | 30.8% | 921 | 31.7% |

[a]Figures for areas which respondents "wrote in" are not included because of problems with inadequate data.

It is surprising that so few of the more selective institutions felt that assessment of academic skills was not necessary (Table 6). Less than 20% of the private universities and less than 5% of the private four-year colleges with selective admissions criteria indicated that assessment was not needed.

Tests are the most common method of assessment. Two broad types of tests are used to assess the skills levels of entering freshmen: **scholastic tests** and **locally administered tests**. **Scholastic tests** are commercially developed tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Testing Program (ACT), which were designed to measure students' aptitude or ability to perform in college. They are usually taken prior to college as part of admissions but may also be used to assess the skills levels of students. **Locally administered tests** are tests which have been either purchased or developed by a college or university and are administered by it for the purpose of assessing skills of students. Results of scholastic tests such as the SAT and the ACT are used by about three fourths of the institutions, as are results of tests which are locally administered, to assess the academic skills levels of students (Tables 6 and 7).[12]

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[12] For complete information on methods of assessment by institutional perceptions of poor academic preparation of entering students and type of institution (question 7), see Tables D-5 and D-6 in Appendix D.

Table 6

METHODS USED TO ASSESS ACADEMIC SKILLS LEVELS OF ENTERING FRESHMEN BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | N | Percentage Using Methods of Assessment[a] | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | None Necessary | Scholastic Test Results | Locally Administered Tests |
| Private University | 29 | 17.2% | 82.8% | 44.8% |
| Public University | 52 | 1.9 | 88.5 | 71.2 |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 95 | 4.2 | 88.4 | 72.6 |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 34 | 0.0 | 82.4 | 67.7 |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 288 | 0.4 | 86.8 | 75.7 |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 156 | 1.9 | 88.5 | 67.3 |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 75 | 0.0 | 65.3 | 74.7 |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 205 | 0.5 | 63.4 | 80.0 |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 182 | 2.8 | 51.7 | 79.1 |
| Total | 1116 | 1.8% | 75.5% | 74.3% |

[a]See Table D-5 in Appendix D for the percentage of institutions using other methods to assess academic skills levels of entering freshmen.

Table 7

METHODS USED TO ASSESS ACADEMIC SKILLS LEVELS
OF ENTERING FRESHMEN BY PERCEIVED EXTENT OF PROBLEM

| Perceived Extent of Problem | N | Percentage Using Methods of Assessment[a] | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | None Necessary | Scholastic Test Results | Locally Administered Tests |
| Very Much of a Problem | 378 | 1.1% | 67.2% | 81.0% |
| Somewhat of a Problem | 615 | 0.8 | 77.6 | 75.9 |
| Not Much of a Problem | 129 | 0.8 | 85.3 | 62.0 |
| Not a Problem at All | 37 | 27.0 | 62.2 | 37.8 |
| Total | 1159 | 1.7% | 74.6% | 78.8% |

[a]See Table D-6 in Appendix D for the percentage of institutions using other methods to assess academic skills levels of entering freshmen.

Although the vast majority of the institutions use tests to assess skills levels, the tendency to rely on scholastic test results versus results on a locally administered test varies by type of institution. The universities and four-year colleges are more likely to rely on scholastic tests than two-year colleges, regardless of whether they are private or public institutions. In contrast to the use of scholastic tests, differences in the use of locally administered tests occur between private universities and the other types of institutions. Less than half of the private universities (45%) use local tests while more than two thirds of the other types of institutions use them. Public two-year colleges are most likely to use locally administered tests (Table 6).

Not surprisingly, when asked about the assessment of skills levels of entering freshmen, institutions which feel that poor academic preparation is not a problem are most likely to say that no assessment is necessary. However, even among these institutions, fewer than three out of ten felt that the assessment of skills levels is unnecessary (Table 7).

Institutions with different perceptions of academic preparation vary in the degree to which they rely on scholastic tests as opposed to tests administered by the college. Scholastic test results, which are most likely to be used at institutions which perceive poor academic preparation to be not much of a problem, are used by the majority of institutions, regardless of their perceptions of the academic preparation of entering students. In contrast, the use of locally administered tests is directly related to perceptions of the problem (Table 7). Over 80% of the institutions perceiving poor academic preparation to be very much of a problem use locally admin-

istered tests, while less than 40% of the institutions perceiving poor academic preparation to be not a problem at all use them.

The universities and colleges which feel that they have great problems are not ignoring these problems -- they have implemented testing procedures to assess the academic skills levels of their entering students.

## MEETING THE NEED FOR HELP IN BASIC SKILLS

Because the vast majority of the responding institutions perceive deficiencies in basic skills to be a problem and report that a substantial proportion of their students need assistance in specific skills areas, we may ask what these institutions are doing to meet a need which historically was not the responsibility of institutions of higher education. Offering services such as courses, tutoring, counseling, summer programs, computer assisted instruction, and laboratories in basic skills areas indicates that the institutions are attempting to assist underprepared students.

### Basic Skills Courses

The most common method of assistance is through basic skills courses. The overwhelming majority of the institutions offer courses to students in need of help in each of the basic skills subject areas of reading, basic writing, and basic mathematics -- 82% offer reading courses, 91% offer basic writing courses, and 86% offer basic mathematics courses.

The patterns of course offerings by type of institution are generally consistent with expectations based on the expressed percentages of entering students requiring help in the basic skills (Table 5, page 21). For example, although the majority of the private universities and private four-year selective colleges offer courses in the basic skills areas, they are less likely to offer them than the other types of institutions (Table 8). In contrast, public two-year colleges, which serve the bulk of the nontraditional student population, are most likely to offer such courses.

The only institutions which are not likely to offer courses for students who need help in reading, basic writing, or basic mathematics are those in which skills deficiencies are not perceived as a problem -- primarily private universities and private four-year selective colleges (Table 9). However, the relationship between institutional perceptions of the problem and whether courses are offered varies somewhat by skills area.

Institutions are likely to offer courses in basic writing whether or not students are perceived to be poorly prepared. With the exception of institutions which feel that skills deficiencies are not a problem at all, between 90% and 95% of the institutions offer basic writing courses. In contrast, offering courses in reading and basic mathematics is more closely related to overall perceptions of student need for assistance. Reading and basic mathematics courses are about 20% more likely to be offered by institutions which perceive the skills deficiencies of their students to be very much of a problem than by institutions which perceive these deficiencies to be not much of a problem.

Table 8

COURSE OFFERINGS IN BASIC SKILLS BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Institution | Reading | | Basic Writing | | Basic Mathematics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % Offer[a] | % Mandatory[b] | % Offer[a] | % Mandatory[b] | % Offer[a] | % Mandatory[b] |
| Private University | 55.0% (29)[c] | 37.5% (16) | 72.4% (29) | 47.6% (21) | 62.1% (29) | 50.0% (18) |
| Public University | 71.2 (52) | 21.6 (37) | 92.3 (52) | 50.0 (48) | 84.6 (52) | 34.1 (44) |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 53.7 (95) | 29.4 (51) | 83.2 (95) | 59.5 (79) | 61.1 (95) | 39.7 (58) |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 73.5 (34) | 32.0 (25) | 97.1 (34) | 66.7 (33) | 85.3 (34) | 31.0 (29) |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 77.9 (289) | 52.0 (225) | 90.3 (289) | 71.3 (261) | 80.3 (289) | 59.9 (232) |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 88.5 (157) | 41.7 (139) | 94.3 (157) | 57.4 (148) | 91.7 (157) | 54.2 (144) |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 79.0 (76) | 56.7 (60) | 85.5 (76) | 60.0 (65) | 89.5 (76) | 52.9 (60) |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 94.7 (206) | 42.6 (195) | 92.2 (206) | 51.1 (190) | 96.6 (206) | 43.7 (199) |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 96.7 (183) | 29.9 (177) | 94.5 (183) | 34.1 (173) | 97.8 (183) | 29.1 (179) |
| Total | 82.5% (1121) | 41.3% (925) | 90.8% (1121) | 55.9% (1018) | 86.6% (1121) | 46.1% (972) |

[a]The percentages in this column represent the institutions offering courses in the skills area. For example 55.0% of the 29 private universities offer reading courses.

[b]The percentages in this column represent the institutions which make skills courses mandatory, based on those offering courses. For example, 37.5% of the 16 private universities which offer reading courses make them mandatory.

[c]The number in parentheses is the number of cases on which the percentage is based. For example, of the 29 private universities, 55.0% offer reading courses.

Table 9

COURSE OFFERINGS IN BASIC SKILLS BY PERCEIVED EXTENT OF PROBLEM

| Perceived Extent of Problem | Reading | | Basic Writing | | Basic Mathematics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % Offer[a] | % Mandatory[b] | % Offer[a] | % Mandatory[b] | % Offer[a] | % Mandatory[b] |
| Very Much of a Problem | 90.8% (379)[c] | 51.5% (344) | 94.2% (379) | 60.8% (357) | 94.2% (379) | 55.5% (357) |
| Somewhat of a Problem | 84.7 (616) | 35.6 (522) | 94.5 (616) | 54.6 (582) | 88.8 (616) | 41.9 (547) |
| Not Much of a Problem | 68.5 (130) | 31.5 (89) | 89.2 (130) | 43.1 (116) | 73.8 (130) | 30.2 (96) |
| Not a Problem at All | 8.1 (37) | d (3) | 8.1 (37) | d (3) | 10.8 (37) | d (4) |
| Total | 82.4% (1163) | 40.9% (958) | 91.0% (1163) | 55.5% (1058) | 86.4% (1163) | 45.7% (1004) |

[a]The percentages in this column represent the institutions offering courses in the skills area. For example 90.8% of the institutions perceiving poor academic preparation of entering freshmen to be very much of a problem offer reading courses.

[b]The percentages in this column represent the institutions deciding to make skills courses mandatory, based on those offering courses. For example 51.5% of the 344 institutions which perceive poor academic preparation of entering freshmen to be very much of a problem and offer reading courses, make them mandatory.

[c]The number in parentheses is the number of cases on which the percentage is based. For example, of the 379 institutions which perceive academic preparation of entering freshmen to be very much of a problem, 90.8% offer courses in Reading.

[d]There are too few institutions in this category to calculate a meaningful percentage.

This tendency for institutions to offer basic writing courses (but not reading or basic mathematics courses) regardless of perceived need for assistance raises some interesting questions. Perhaps the recurrent cries that students cannot write leads institutions to offer basic writing courses even though they do not perceive a widespread need.

There is a difference, of course, between offering courses to students who require help in basic skills and mandating that such courses be taken. Institutions are slightly more likely to make basic writing courses mandatory (56%) than basic mathematics courses (46%) or reading courses (41%) (Table 9). Again, this may reflect a particular concern with improving student writing.

For all three skills areas, the institutions perceiving greater student need are more likely to make the courses mandatory. There are, however, some ironies in the pattern of whether courses in basic skills are mandatory in different types of institutions. For example, basic skills courses are least likely to be mandatory in public two-year open admissions institutions, the institutions in which student need is perceived to be the greatest. At the other extreme, the more selective institutions are not as likely to make courses mandatory as the middle range institutions.

The decision to make basic skills courses mandatory for the students who need such courses is susceptible to a number of possible interpretations. It may reflect the institution's seriousness about dealing with skills deficiencies, or, it may reflect a lack of faith that the students will recognize their skills deficiencies and voluntarily seek assistance. In addition, bud-

getary constraints may dictate whether or not courses are mandatory.

### Other Services

We found that offering courses, the traditional method of instruction, is the most common approach for meeting the needs of students who are deficient in the basic skills. However, offering courses is not the only approach used by the responding institutions; others are tutoring, counseling, summer programs, computer assisted instruction and laboratories (Tables D-7, D-8 and D-9 in Appendix D). It is likely that institutions address the skills deficiencies of their students through a combination of services. Institutions might offer courses in conjunction with other services such as those considered in the survey, but our information does not permit us to look at these possible combinations.

Of the services other than courses which we considered,[13] tutoring and counseling are the most common methods used to address the skills deficiencies of the students. Over 80% of the institutions which specified methods other than courses for meeting the basic skills need of students do so through tutoring, regardless of the type of institution or skills area. Counseling is mentioned by half of these institutions and preadmission summer programs are used by less than one third of them. Computer

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[13] Question 14 asked the institutions to indicate the learning modes which are used to address the basic skills needs of students, if they have chosen not to address these needs through formal courses. However, because very few of the institutions do not offer courses and over half of the institutions responding to the question do offer courses, we decided to retain and present all of the reported information.

assisted instruction is mentioned by a relatively small percentage of these institutions; only sixteen percent use it to address deficiencies in basic mathematics, the area in which it is most likely to be used.[14] However, there is a tendency for the public and larger institutions to use more computer assisted instruction, particularly in reading. Laboratories are also used by a relatively small percentage of these institutions; they are most likely to have been mentioned by public four-year selective institutions. Thus, there are no clear patterns of services other than courses offered by institution type.

## PLACEMENT INTO AND EXIT FROM BASIC SKILLS COURSES

Because most of the institutions responding to the survey view skills deficiencies as a problem and also offer courses to address the problem, an interesting question arises as to methods used for placement into and exit from these courses.

### Placement into Basic Skills Courses

Given the heavy reliance on tests for assessing the academic skills levels of entering freshmen, we were not surprised to find that tests are the most common method for placing students in courses designed for students who need help in the basic skills areas. Approximately three fourths of the institutions offering courses in basic skills use tests for placement,

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[14] If we conducted the survey today, we would expect very different results in the use of computer assisted instruction as a result of the dramatic increase in the use of microcomputers.

and almost nine out of ten of the institutions which make these courses mandatory use tests for placement into courses in each of the skills areas (Table 10). Unfortunately, we cannot distinguish scholastic tests such as the SAT and the ACT which are traditionally used for admissions purposes and may also be used for placement from those tests which are used only for placement.

About 15% of the institutions which offer basic skills courses mentioned methods other than tests for placing students into courses.[15] Of these institutions, high school grades were the most common method mentioned, regardless of skills area (reading, 43%; basic writing, 46%; basic mathematics, 56%). The second most common method was faculty referral. Student request, the third method, was mentioned by a relatively small percentage of the institutions. (See Table D-10 in Appendix D).

While the vast majority of institutions offering courses in basic skills use tests to place students in the courses, there is a relationship between institutional perceptions of academic preparation and the tendency to use tests. Institutions which consider poor academic preparation of entering students to be very much of a problem are considerably more likely to use tests for placement than those which do not consider poor academic preparation to be much of a problem. (Table D-11 in Appendix D presents analogous information by type of institution.)

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[15] When institutions specified writing samples in response to question 12, they were coded as writing samples in the question on tests used for placement into courses (question 11). We limited valid responses to question 12 to measures which did not require the student to use paper and pencil specifically for placement into courses.

Table 10

PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONS USING TESTS
FOR PLACEMENT INTO BASIC SKILLS COURSES
BY COURSE OFFERINGS AND PERCEIVED EXTENT OF PROBLEM

| Perceived Extent of Problem | Reading | | Basic Writing | | Basic Mathematics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % Offer[a] | % Mandatory[b] | % Offer[a] | % Mandatory[b] | % Offer[a] | % Mandatory[b] |
| Very Much of a Problem | 84.6% (344)[c] | 96.6% (177) | 82.4% (357) | 89.4% (217) | 79.8% (357) | 91.4% (198) |
| Somewhat of a Problem | 74.5 (522) | 88.7 (186) | 75.1 (582) | 82.4 (318) | 71.9 (547) | 82.1 (229) |
| Not Much of a Problem | 58.4 (89) | 67.9 (28) | 67.2 (116) | 76.0 (50) | 60.4 (96) | 75.9 (29) |
| Not a Problem at All | [d] (3) | [d] (1) | [d] (3) | [d] (2) | [d] (4) | [d] (3) |
| Total | 76.7% (958) | 90.8% (392) | 76.6% (1058) | 84.5% (587) | 73.6% (1004) | 85.8% (459) |

[a]The percentages is this column represent the institutions offering courses in the skills area. For example, 84.6% of the institutions which perceive poor academic preparation to be very much of a problem and offer reading courses, use tests for placement into the reading courses.

[b]The percentages in this column represent the institutions which make skills courses mandatory, based on those offering courses. For example, 96.6% of the institutions which perceive poor academic preparation to be very much of a problem and make reading courses mandatory, use tests for placement into the reading courses.

[c]The number in parentheses is the number of cases on which the percentage is based. For example, of the 344 institutions which perceive poor academic preparation of entering freshmen to be very much of a problem and which offer reading courses, 84.6% use tests for placement into the reading courses.

[d]There are too few institutions in this category to calculate a meaningful percentage.

Although tests are the common method for placing students into courses, there is little agreement on the tests themselves. The greatest agreement among the institutions is that they prefer to use their own instruments. Locally developed tests are the most commonly used tests for placement into basic writing and basic mathematics courses. More than half of the institutions use locally developed tests for placement into basic mathematics courses and either a locally developed test or a writing sample for placement into basic writing courses. The Nelson Denny (a commercially developed, multiple-choice, standardized test) is used most frequently for placement into reading courses (29%), followed by locally developed tests (20%). (See Tables D-12, D-13, and D-14 in Appendix D for the most commonly used tests for placement into reading, basic writing, and basic mathematics courses.)

There are various possible reasons for this lack of agreement. Are the commmercially available tests perceived as inadequate? Do the institutions disagree about what skills students should possess? What is clear is that a substantial proportion of the institutions -- at least half -- are committing the necessary time and resources to develop local instruments for course placement.

Because the greatest consensus among institutions was to use locally developed tests for placement into courses, we will focus on their use. Although there are differences among the different types of institutions in the degree to which they use locally developed tests for placement into courses, there is no clear pattern or relationship. Locally developed tests are used more to place students into basic writing and basic math-

ematics courses than into reading courses (Table 11). The exception is four-year public colleges with selective admissions criteria; approximately 43% of these institutions use locally developed tests for placement into both reading and basic writing courses, while more than two thirds of them use locally developed tests for basic mathematics.

The tendency to rely on locally developed tests to place students into basic mathematics courses probably results from disagreement concerning the domain which should be tested and covered in courses. For example, some mathematics faculty feel strongly that all students should know mathematics above the level of algebra, while others feel that this is unnecessary for most students. The tendency to rely on locally developed tests or writing samples for placement into basic writing courses probably results from the movement within the field toward concensus that the only way to measure writing is through writing.

There is no consistent pattern to suggest that the decision to develop and use a local test for placement into courses is a function of institutional perceptions of student need (Table 12). The decision to develop local tests for placement is one possible outcome of two related actions: a decision to test students and a decision on the instrument for testing. It may result from a combination of factors other than the institutional perceptions of the extent of the poor academic preparation of entering freshmen and the type of institution. Such factors might include the complex interplay of the beliefs and decisions of state or local adminstrators with those of faculty.

Table 11

PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONS USING LOCALLY DEVELOPED TESTS FOR PLACEMENT BY THE TYPE OF INSTITUTION[a]

| Type of Institution | Percentage Using Locally Developed Tests: Reading | Basic Writing | Basic Mathematics |
|---|---|---|---|
| Private University | 18.2% (11)[b] | 35.3% (17) | 35.7% (14) |
| Public University | 24.0 (25) | 43.2 (37) | 62.2 (37) |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 28.6 (28) | 53.7 (54) | 66.7 (36) |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 42.9 (14) | 43.3 (30) | 68.2 (22) |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 15.8 (171) | 42.2 (199) | 42.6 (162) |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 11.7 (103) | 31.7 (120) | 45.6 (114) |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 29.8 (47) | 48.8 (43) | 50.0 (44) |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 22.6 (168) | 50.3 (155) | 54.7 (159) |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 23.0 (139) | 46.9 (128) | 57.5 (127) |
| Total | 20.5% (706) | 44.1% (783) | 51.7% (715) |

[a]This table is restricted to institutions specifying tests for placement into basic skills courses.

[b]The number in parentheses is the number of cases on which the percentage is based. For example, of the 11 private universities which use tests for placement into reading courses, 18.2% use locally developed tests.

Table 12

PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONS USING LOCALLY DEVELOPED TESTS FOR PLACEMENT BY PERCEIVED EXTENT OF PROBLEM[a]

| Extent of Problem | Percentage Using Locally Developed Tests | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Reading | Basic Writing[b] | Basic Mathematics |
| Very Much of a Problem | 18.9% (291)[c] | 45.9% (294) | 52.3% (285) |
| Somewhat of a Problem | 20.6 (389) | 44.4 (437) | 51.9 (393) |
| Not Much of a Problem | 30.8 (52) | 39.7 (78) | 58.6 (58) |
| Not a Problem at All | [d] (3) | [d] (2) | [d] (3) |
| Total | 20.5% (735) | 44.4% (811) | 52.4% (739) |

[a]This table is restricted to institutions specifying tests for placement into basic skills courses.

[b]An additional 96 institutions (11.7% of those using tests to place students in basic writing courses) indicated that they use writing samples for placement into courses. Writing samples are often, but not always, locally developed tests.

[c]The number in parentheses is the number of institutions offering courses in the skills area. For example, of the 291 institutions which perceive poor academic preparation as very much of a problem and which offer reading courses, 18.9% use locally developed tests for placement into the reading courses.

[d]There are too few institutions in this category to calculate a meaningful percentage.

## Exit Criteria

How do institutions determine when students have shown adequate improvement in basic skills? What methods of assessment are used for exit from basic skills courses? The responding institutions use two basic approaches to determine when students have shown adequate improvement in a skills area -- teacher judgment or more standardized criteria such as a locally developed departmental final or a commercially developed test.

The assessment of student progress has long been a faculty right. At the same time, however, using more standardized criteria such as a locally developed departmental final or a commercially developed test assures the application of uniform standards. Because these two concerns are in potential conflict, institutions must balance the two. Reliance on faculty judgment permits more variation in standards, while reliance on test scores which are beyond the control of an individual faculty member may be seen as an infringement of faculty rights. While most of the institutions have gone the traditional route of leaving decisions concerning student progress to individual faculty, this is far from universal.

Of the institutions offering courses in skills areas, less than 15% rely solely on test scores and approximately 30% rely on test scores either alone or in combination with teacher judgment as criteria for students to exit from courses (Table 13 and Table D-15 in Appendix D). Institutions are slightly more likely to use tests as criteria for exiting from reading courses than from basic writing or basic mathematics courses.

Table 13

PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONS USING TESTS AS CRITERIA FOR EXITING FROM BASIC SKILLS COURSES[a] BY PERCEIVED EXTENT OF PROBLEM

| Perceived Extent of Problem | Reading | Basic Writing | Basic Mathematics |
|---|---|---|---|
| Very Much of a Problem | 45.2% (323)[b] | 35.7% (333) | 37.2% (320) |
| Somewhat of a Problem | 35.1 (461) | 28.1 (533) | 28.7 (484) |
| Not Much of a Problem | 23.8 (80) | 17.5 (103) | 19.8 (81) |
| Not a Problem at All | [c] (3) | [c] (3) | [c] (3) |
| Total | 37.8% (867) | 29.6% (972) | 30.9% (889) |

[a]Each column of this table is restricted to institutions which offer courses in the specific basic skills areas and specified exit criteria. Tests can be used alone or in combination with other criteria.

[b]The number in parentheses is the number of cases on which the percentage is based. For example, of the 323 institutions which perceived poor academic preparation to be very much of a problem and offer reading courses, 45.2% use tests as criteria for exiting from courses.

[c]There are too few institutions in this category to calculate a meaningful percentage.

While the overall tendency is not to rely on test scores for exit from basic skills courses, the institutions serving larger proportions of underprepared students are more likely to rely on test scores. Institutions which view poor academic preparation to be very much of a problem are twice as likely to use tests solely or in conjunction with teacher judgment as exit criteria from basic skills courses as are those in which poor academic preparation is considered not much of a problem. The extent to which different types of institutions rely on tests as exit criteria further suggests this pattern. For example, only 14% of the private universities use tests for exiting from reading courses, while 43% of the public two-year colleges which require a high school diploma for admission use tests for exiting from reading courses (Table D-16 in Appendix D). Institutions which perceive greater problems with poor academic preparation appear to be more likely to resolve the balance of a need for uniform standards and the protection of faculty rights in favor of uniform standards.

Institutions at which courses are mandatory are more likely to use tests solely or in conjunction with teacher judgment as exit criteria from courses than those at which courses are not mandatory (Table 14). Perhaps at institutions where courses are mandated, faculty are more willing to relinquish control over assessing student progress because of a greater concern with ensuring uniform standards for determining when students have shown adequate improvement.

Table 14

PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONS USING TESTS AS CRITERIA FOR EXITING FROM BASIC SKILLS COURSES[a] BY WHETHER THEY ARE MANDATORY

| Courses | Percentage Using Tests | |
|---|---|---|
| | Courses Offered, Not Mandatory | Courses Offered and Mandatory |
| Reading Courses | 30.5%[b] (499) | 47.0% (383) |
| Basic Writing Courses | 24.3 (424) | 33.5 (564) |
| Basic Mathematics Courses | 23.0 (473) | 39.5 (433) |

[a]This table is restricted to institutions which offer courses in each of the three basic skills areas. Tests may be used as the sole criteria for exit or in conjunction with faculty judgment.

[b]The number in parentheses is the number of cases on which the percentage is based. For example, of the 499 institutions which offer reading courses, but do not make them mandatory, 30.5% use tests as criteria for exiting from the courses.

## CONCLUSION

Institutions of higher education throughout the country are grappling with decisions on how best to compensate for inadequate skills of entering students. At the same time, national commissions and task forces are examining every facet of education from pre-school to high school. What will this examination yield? IF teaching becomes the noble and professional field it should rightly be and the quality of teaching improves at all levels, IF children are given equal opportunity for educational experiences years before what is now common practice, IF varieties of educational technologies are explored and creatively utilized, and IF literacy and skills are redefined and taught in a curriculum both rigorous and stimulating, THEN when this study is replicated a decade hence we may look forward to results which are based on an even larger number of students entering higher education in America who truly possess the broad range of skills and interests which they will need to carry them successfully through education and life in the twenty-first century.

# APPENDIX A

## QUESTIONNAIRE AND LETTERS SENT TO PRESIDENTS

*The City University of New York*

*Office of Academic Affairs*
*535 East 80 Street, New York, N.Y. 10021*

April, 1981

*Dear President:*

In recent years more and more of the nation's colleges and universities have been faced with the problem of admitting students who are inadequately prepared to enter conventional college programs. To meet this challenge, The City University of New York (CUNY), in 1978, initiated the Freshman Skills Assessment Program (FSAP). Each unit of CUNY administers tests in reading, writing, and mathematics to all entering freshmen. These tests are used for placement, and students must demonstrate skills in these areas before they can move on to the junior year. Included is some information about the FSAP which might be of interest to you.

The Office of Academic Affairs of CUNY is conducting a survey of all institutions in the United States offering undergraduate programs. We would like to know the extent to which colleges and universities perceive deficiencies in basic skills as a problem for the students who attend these colleges, the extent to which testing plays a part in the diagnosis of observed deficiencies, and ways in which measures other than course grades are used to determine movement of students within colleges from one level to another (e.g. freshman year to sophomore year).

The data from the survey should yield useful information which we believe will be of interest to all members of the academic community. The results of the survey will be made available to all colleges which have special concern about meeting the needs of the underprepared student.

Please route the attached questionnaire to the appropiate party with the request that he or she complete it and return it to this office in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. Because of the complexities involved in collecting the data, we would appreciate receiving your response no later than May 31, 1981.

If you have any other information which would give a clearer picture of the services your college provides for students in basic skills programs, please enclose such material with the completed questionnaire. If you have questions, please call me at (212) 794-5428, or Michael Ribaudo at (212) 794-5443.

Finally, I would like to assure you of the confidentiality of the information you provide us; all data will be presented in the aggregate and no single institution will be mentioned, either by name or by identifying data.

We appreciate your participation in this important project and look forward to receiving your completed questionnaire.

*Sincerely,*

*Marie Jean Lederman*
*University Associate Dean,*
*Academic Affairs*

*The City University of New York*

*Office of Academic Affairs*
*535 East 80 Street, New York, N.Y. 10021*
(212) 794- 5427

September, 1981

Dear President:

Last Spring, the enclosed letter and questionnaire were mailed to all higher education institutions in the United States which offer undergraduate programs.

The response rate to date has been approximately 30%. In an attempt to increase that rate and thereby further ensure our confidence in the results, we are now asking that institutions which did not return completed questionnaires do so at this time.

Since your college did not respond to the original survey, we are requesting that you forward the questionnaire to the appropriate individual at your campus and that you impress upon that individual the importance of the project. We would greatly appreciate a response by November 1, 1981. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Marie J. Lederman

Marie Jean Lederman
University Associate Dean,
Academic Affairs

MJL:ss
Enclosures

The City University of New York
Office of Academic Affairs
535 East 80th Street
New York, N.Y. 10021

# Assessment and Improvement of the Academic Skills of Entering Freshmen Students

Please indicate your response by placing a check (✓) in the appropriate box or by supplying the appropriate information.

1. What is the approximate size of your usual entering freshman class?

   Total number of entering freshmen _____

2. From the following list, rank (in order of importance) criteria used by your college in accepting students. Place the number 1 next to the most important criterion, the number 2 next to the second most important criterion, etc.

   _____ academic record (GPA, courses taken, etc.)
   _____ scholastic test results (SAT, ACT, etc.)
   _____ recommendations
   _____ interview
   _____ interests of the student
   _____ other (please specify)_____
   _____

3. Approximately what percentage of your usual entering freshman class is:

   White (non-Hispanic) ____ %
   Black (not of Hispanic origin) ____ %
   Hispanic (regardless of race) ____ %
   Asian or Pacific Islander ____ %
   American Indian or Native Alaskan ____ %

4. Approximately what percentage of your usual entering freshman class is:

   18 years of age or younger ____ %
   19-24 years of age ____ %
   25 years of age or older ____ %

5. Approximately what percentage of your usual entering freshman class comes from homes where:

   English is spoken exclusively ____ %
   both English and another language are spoken ____ %
   only a language other than English is spoken ____ %

6. Approximately what percentage of your freshmen students:

   lives on or near campus? ____ %
   commutes regularly to campus each day? ____ %

7. What process is used by your college to assess the academic skills levels of entering freshmen? (check all that apply)

   ____ no assessment made
   ____ no assessment necessary
   ____ previous academic records
   ____ scholastic tests results (SAT, ACT, etc.)
   ____ interview
   ____ local tests administered by your college
   ____ other (please specify) _____
   _____

8. Overall, to what extent is poor academic preparation of entering freshmen perceived by your college as a problem?

   a.) ____ very much of a problem
   b.) ____ somewhat of a problem
   c.) ____ not much of a problem
   d.) ____ not a problem at all

   IF YOU ANSWERED 8d, please proceed directly to question 18.

9. What percentage of your entering freshman class requires help in the following *basic skill* areas:

   Reading____%
   Writing____%
   Mathematics____%
   Other (please specify)
   _____ _____ %
   _____ _____ %
   _____ _____ %

10. In column A, check each area in which your college offers courses to students who need help in that area. In column B, indicate if the course is mandatory.

| | A | B |
|---|---|---|
| Reading | _____ | _____ |
| Basic writing | _____ | _____ |
| Basic mathematics | _____ | _____ |
| Other (please specify) | | |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

**11.** If tests are used to determine placement into these courses, list the name of commercial tests used in each area (if college designed tests are used please so indicate) and the minimum level of performance for exemption from remediation.

| | Test(s) | Minimum Level of Performance for Exemption from Remediation |
|---|---|---|
| Reading | _____ | _____ |
| Basic writing | _____ | _____ |
| Basic mathematics | _____ | _____ |
| Other (as listed in Question 10) | | |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

**12.** If measures other than tests are used to determine placement in these courses please indicate what they are.

| | |
|---|---|
| Reading | _____ |
| Basic writing | _____ |
| Basic mathematics | _____ |
| Other (as listed in Question 10) | |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

**13.** Are courses available specifically for students who are not proficient in English *because* English *is not* their native language?

_____Yes _____ No _____Not Applicable

**14.** If you have assessed that freshman students need help in basic skills and you have chosen not to address these needs through formal courses, what learning modes have you chosen to use? (Check all that apply)

| | Pre-admission Summer Program | Counseling | Tutoring | Computer Assisted Instruction | Other (please specify and explain the program) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Basic writing | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Basic mathematics | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Other (as listed in Question 10) | | | | | |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

**15.** For students who have been placed in basic skills courses, what measures, if any, are used to determine when their skills have been improved to the point where remediation is no longer needed?

| | Individual Teacher Judgment | Other (please specify) |
|---|---|---|
| Reading | _____ | _____ |
| Basic writing | _____ | _____ |
| Basic mathematics | _____ | _____ |
| Other (as listed in Question 10) | | |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

**16.** Does your college use any measurement(s) other than grades in courses to determine whether a student moves from one level of college standing to another (e.g. from freshman to sophomore or from sophomore to junior, etc.), or as a graduation requirement?

_____yes _____no

If your answer to the above is "yes", please specify, which measurements are used.

_____

_____

**17.** What has your college found to be the *most effective* way to help students with recognizable skills deficiencies maintain good academic standing? (Please discuss below).

_____

_____

_____

**18.** Name, address, telephone number, and title of person replying.

_____

_____

If you need more space to answer any of the items, please attach an additional page.

***We sincerely appreciate your completing this survey, and we thank you for your timely reply.***

## APPENDIX B

## REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE SAMPLE

We used information from the Education Directory, Colleges and Universities, 1979-1980[16] to assess the representativeness of the sample. First we compared the distribution of institutions in the sample to those in the population on four selected variables: level and control of the institution, institution size, selectivity of admissions, and geographic region (Tables B-1 through B-4).

The categories of level and control of the institution are four-year private, four-year public, two-year private, and two-year public institutions.[17] Based on examination of the population distribution of institution size, measured by the number of students, we created four categories of size: fewer than 1,000, 1,000-4,999, 5,000-9,999 and 10,000 or more. Selectivity of admissions criteria, which we took directly from the Education Directory, has three categories: open admissions, high school (high school graduation is the only requirement for admissions), and selective (some academic requirement such as a minimum high school grade is a requirement for admissions in addition to high school graduation. Geographic region consists of four areas (North Atlantic, Great Lakes and Plains, Southeast, and Southwest) and two additional catego-

[16] Education Directory, Colleges and Universities 1979-80 (Washington, D.C.: The National Center for Educational Statistics, 1980).

[17] Universities are included in the categories of four-year institutions.

ries (U.S. Service Schools and Outlying Areas).

The sample distribution approximates that of the population to a remarkable degree (Tables B-1 through B-4). Differences between the sample and population are less than 3% in all of the categories of level and control of the institution, with the exception of the 5.2% difference in the category of four-year public institutions (Table B-1). Similarly, differences between the sample and population in the categories of size do not exceed 3%, with the exception of the 7.2% difference in the category of institutions with fewer than 1,000 students (Table B-2). The sample distribution deviates from the population distribution by less than 2% in all three categories of selectivity of admissions (Table B-3) and by less than 1% in all six region categories (Table B-4).

We also compared the distributions of sample and population institutions in each category of level and control of the institution, subdivided by each of the other variables of instititution size, selectivity of admissions, and geographic region. The high degree of correspondence between the sample and population remain. There are no differences greater than 6%, with the majority being smaller, when the level and control of the institution are broken down by size (Table B-5). None of the differences between the sample and population exceed 5%, and in most cases they are considerably smaller, when the level and control of the institution is broken down by selectivity of admissions (Table B-6) and by geographic region (Table B-7).

Because the distributions of sample and population institutions are re-

markably similar, we are confident that our sample is representative of institutions of higher education throughout the United States.

Table B-1

COMPARISON OF POPULATION AND SAMPLE:
LEVEL AND CONTROL OF INSTITUTION[a]

| Level and Control of Institution | Population | | Sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Percentage | N | Percentage |
| 4 Year Private[b] | 1106 | 40.6% | 478 | 37.7% |
| 4 Year Public[b] | 437 | 16.0 | 269 | 21.2 |
| 2 Year Private | 288 | 10.6 | 98 | 7.7 |
| 2 Year Public | 894 | 32.8 | 422 | 33.3 |
| Total | 2725 | 100.0% | 1267 | 100.0% |

[a]Only institutions for which we have the data are included.

[b]Universities are included in this category.

Table B-2

COMPARISON OF POPULATION AND SAMPLE:
SIZE OF INSTITUTION

| Size | Population | | Sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Percentage | N | Percentage |
| <1,000 | 905 | 34.0% | 340 | 26.8% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 1133 | 42.6 | 561 | 44.2 |
| 5,000-9,999 | 350 | 13.1 | 191 | 15.1 |
| 10,000+ | 274 | 10.3 | 163 | 12.8 |
| Total | 2662 | 100.0% | 1269 | 100.0% |

Table B-3

COMPARISON OF POPULATION AND SAMPLE:
SELECTIVITY OF ADMISSIONS

| Selectivity of Admissions | Population | | Sample[a] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Percentage | N | Percentage |
| Selective | 349 | 13.3% | 183 | 15.1% |
| High School | 1825 | 69.7 | 828 | 68.1 |
| Open Admissions | 444 | 17.0 | 204 | 16.8 |
| Total | 2618 | 100.0% | 1215 | 100.0% |

[a]Only institutions for which we have the data are included.

Table B-4

COMPARISON OF POPULATION AND SAMPLE:
GEOGRAPHIC REGION

| Geographic Region | Population | | Sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Percentage | N | Percentage |
| North Atlantic | 755 | 27.7% | 340 | 26.8% |
| Great Lakes & Plains | 694 | 25.5 | 335 | 26.4 |
| Southeast | 616 | 22.6 | 287 | 22.6 |
| West & Southwest | 623 | 22.9 | 284 | 22.4 |
| U.S. Service Schools | 3 | 0.1 | 4 | 0.3 |
| Outlying Areas | 34 | 1.2 | 19 | 1.5 |
| Total | 2725 | 100.0% | 1269 | 100.0% |

Table B-5

COMPARISON OF POPULATION AND SAMPLE:
SIZE OF INSTITUTION BY LEVEL AND CONTROL OF INSTITUTION

| | Four-Year Institutions[a] | | | | Two-Year Institutions | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Private | | Public | | Private | | Public | | Total | |
| Size | N | Percentage | N | Percentage | N | Percentage | N | Percentage | N | Percentage |
| <1,000 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 511 | 47.4% | 11 | 2.5% | 232 | 85.6% | 151 | 17.2% | 905 | 34.0% |
| Sample | 187 | 39.4% | 10 | 3.7% | 75 | 79.8% | 68 | 16.3% | 340 | 27.1% |
| 1,000-4,999 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 468 | 43.4% | 158 | 36.4% | 37 | 13.7% | 470 | 53.5% | 1133 | 42.6% |
| Sample | 229 | 48.2% | 95 | 35.3% | 17 | 18.1% | 220 | 52.8% | 561 | 44.7% |
| 5,000-9,999 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 68 | 6.3% | 115 | 26.5% | 2 | 0.7% | 165 | 18.8% | 350 | 13.1% |
| Sample | 43 | 9.1% | 69 | 25.7% | 2 | 2.1% | 77 | 18.5% | 191 | 15.2% |
| 10,000+ | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 31 | 2.9% | 150 | 34.6% | 0 | 0.0% | 93 | 10.6% | 274 | 10.3% |
| Sample | 16 | 3.4% | 95 | 35.3% | 0 | 0.0% | 52 | 12.5% | 163 | 13.0% |

[a]Universities are included in this category.

Table B-6

COMPARISON OF POPULATION AND SAMPLE:
SELECTIVITY OF ADMISSIONS BY LEVEL AND CONTROL OF INSTITUTION

| Selectivity of Admissions | Four-Year Institutions[a] | | | | Two-Year Institutions | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Private | | Public | | Private | | Public | | | |
| | N | Percentage | N | Percentage | N | Percentage | N | Percentage | N | Percentage |
| Selective | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 249 | 23.0% | 81 | 19.6% | 15 | 5.3% | 4 | 0.5% | 349 | 13.3% |
| Sample | 126 | 27.0% | 49 | 19.1% | 7 | 7.3% | 1 | 0.3% | 183 | 15.1% |
| High School | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 796 | 73.4% | 322 | 77.8% | 256 | 91.1% | 451 | 53.8% | 1825 | 69.7% |
| Sample | 355 | 71.7% | 201 | 78.5% | 83 | 86.5% | 209 | 52.8% | 828 | 68.1% |
| Open Admissions | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 39 | 3.6% | 11 | 2.7% | 10 | 3.6% | 389 | 45.8% | 444 | 17.0% |
| Sample | 6 | 1.3% | 6 | 2.3% | 6 | 6.3% | 186 | 47.0% | 204 | 16.8% |

[a]Universities are included in this category.

Table B-7

COMPARISON OF POPULATION AND SAMPLE:
GEOGRAPHIC REGION BY LEVEL AND CONTROL OF INSTITUTION

| Geographic Region | Four-Year Institutions[a] | | | | Two-Year Institutions | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Private | | Public | | Private | | Public | | Total | |
| | N | Percentage | N | Percentage | N | Percentage | N | Percentage | N | Percentage |
| North Atlantic | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 372 | 33.6% | 119 | 27.2% | 96 | 33.3% | 168 | 18.8% | 755 | 27.7% |
| Sample | 151 | 31.6% | 66 | 24.5% | 36 | 36.7% | 87 | 20.6% | 340 | 26.8% |
| Great Lakes & Plains | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 322 | 29.1% | 93 | 21.3% | 54 | 18.8% | 225 | 25.2% | 694 | 25.5% |
| Sample | 159 | 33.3% | 61 | 22.7% | 19 | 19.4% | 95 | 22.5% | 334 | 26.4% |
| Southeast | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 216 | 19.5% | 97 | 22.2% | 99 | 34.4% | 204 | 22.8% | 616 | 22.6% |
| Sample | 90 | 18.8% | 58 | 21.6% | 31 | 31.6% | 108 | 25.6% | 287 | 22.7% |
| West & Southwest | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 185 | 16.7% | 118 | 27.0% | 27 | 9.4% | 293 | 32.8% | 623 | 22.9% |
| Sample | 73 | 15.3% | 73 | 27.1% | 7 | 7.1% | 130 | 30.8% | 283 | 22.3% |
| U.S. Service Schools | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 0 | 0.0% | 3 | 0.7% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 3 | 0.1% |
| Sample | 0 | 0.0% | 4 | 1.5% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 4 | 0.3% |
| Outlying Areas | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population | 11 | 1.0% | 7 | 1.6% | 12 | 4.2% | 4 | 0.4% | 34 | 1.2% |
| Sample | 5 | 1.0% | 7 | 2.6% | 5 | 5.1% | 2 | 0.5% | 19 | 1.5% |

[a]Universities are included in this category.

## APPENDIX C

## INTER-CODER RELIABILITY

Because approximately half of the questions on the survey required judgment in coding, we felt it was important to ascertain the extent of inter-coder agreement on these questions. While open-ended questions are our primary concern, for purposes of comparison, we calculate rates of agreement for all of the questions.

### Method

Two independent coders assigned codes to all responses on 70 randomly selected questionnaires (approximately 18% of the 1,269 responses). For each question, we calculated the percentage of the 70 responses to which the two coders assigned the same code. We rejected a correlational method of determining reliability because only one of the open-ended questions (question 8) has response options representing points on a scale rather than discrete, unrelated alternatives.

We categorized each survey question as open-ended, close-ended, or other. The questionnaire on pages 65-66 is marked to indicate how each question was classified. We analyzed the rates of agreement on the different types of questions both separately and combined.

**Open-ended questions** are those which asked the respondent to list the names of tests or other types of measures (questions 11a-11c, 12a-12c,

15a-15c, 16b) or to write a short essay (question 17). We also include question 2, which asked the respondents to assign ranks to various criteria for college acceptance, because the coders needed to excercise judgment in resolving conflicts when, contrary to instructions, a respondent either gave the same rank to more than one criteria, or checked rather than ranked the criteria. Some of the open-ended questions require a coder to choose among as many as 20 possible codes. We selected agreement of 85% or better as an acceptable rate of agreement on open-ended questions.

**Close-ended questions** are those which asked the respondent to either write in a numeral (questions 1, 3a-3e, 4a-4c, 5a-5c, 6a, 6b) or to check one or more response choices (questions 7a-7g, 8, 9a-9c, 10A1-10A3, 10B1-10B3, 13, 14A1-14A4, 14B1-14B4, 14C1-14C4, 16a). Disagreement between two coders on close-ended questions should result only from error. We therefore selected agreement of 95% or better as an acceptable rate for close-ended questions because little judgment is required in coding these questions.

**Other questions** are a variation of open-ended questions. Questions in this category are those in which respondents first wrote in a skill area (e.g., ESL, study skills) and then either supplied the name of a test or checked an available response choice. Other questions include 9d-9f, 10A4-10A6, 10B4-10B6, 11d, 11e, 12d-12f, 14A5, 14A6, 14B5, 14B6, 14C5, 14C6, 14D1-14D6, 14E1-14E6, 15d, 15e. For the other questions we again selected an 85% rate of agreement as acceptable.

**Results**

The mean inter-coder agreement for the total questionnaire was 96.5%, exceeding the criterion level of acceptability. Rates of agreement are highly satisfactory on all types of questions -- 87.8% on open-ended questions, 97.4% on close-ended questions, and 98.4% on other questions (Table C-1).

The rate of intercoder agreement attained the criterion level of 85% on 8 (66.6%) of the open-ended questions (Table C-2). Agreement on the four remaining open-ended questions ranged from 75.5% to 84.3%. Each of these questions had between 13 and 20 possible codes. The large number of codes which could be assigned to the responses probably depressed the levels of agreement.

The rate of inter-coder agreement reached or exceeded the criterion level of 95% on 39 (86.7%) of the close-ended questions (Table C-2). Most of the disagreement in coding the close-ended questions occurred when a question was left blank, the respondent having already supplied percentages for other parts of the question (e.g., the percentage of white students, 3a and the percentage of black students, 3b which sum to 100%). In such cases, the coders often disagreed over whether to assign a missing value to the question or to code the response as 0%. In several cases, disagreement occurred when a respondent either wrote in a percentage which was less than 1% or bracketed two categories together and gave only one percentage.

The rate of inter-coder agreement reached or exceeded the criterion level of 85% on all of the other questions (Table C-2).

The inter-coder reliability of both the total questionnaire and of each type of question (open-ended, close-ended, and other) are highly satisfactory. Although agreement on some individual open-ended and close-ended questions did not reach the criterion level, the reliability of each question category exceeded the standard of acceptability.

Table C-1

MEAN INTER-CODER AGREEMENT BY QUESTION TYPE[a]

| Question Type | N | Percentage | Mean % Agreement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Close-ended | 45 | 49.5% | 97.5% |
| Open-ended | 12 | 13.2 | 87.8 |
| Other | 34 | 37.4 | 98.4 |
| Total | 91 | 100.0% | 96.5% |

[a]See the text for a description of the questions included in each category.

Table C-2

DISTRIBUTION OF INTER-CODER AGREEMENT BY QUESTION TYPE[a]

| Percentage of Inter-Coder Agreement | Question Type | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Close-ended | | Open-ended | | Other | | Total | |
| | N | Percentage | N | Percentage | N | Percentage | N | Percentage |
| 100% | 20 | 44.4%[b] | 0 | 0.0% | 16 | 47.1% | 36 | 39.6% |
| 95-99% | 19 | 42.2 | 3 | 25.0 | 16 | 47.1 | 38 | 41.8 |
| 90-94% | 4 | 8.9 | 2 | 16.7 | 2 | 5.9 | 8 | 8.8 |
| 85-89% | 1 | 2.2 | 3 | 25.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 4.4 |
| 80-84% | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 16.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 2.2 |
| Below 84% | 1 | 2.2 | 2 | 16.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 3.3 |
| Total | 45 | 100.0% | 12 | 100.0% | 34 | 100.0% | 91 | 100.0% |

[a]See the text for a description of the questions included in each category.

The City University of New York
Office of Academic Affairs
535 East 80th Street
New York, N.Y. 10021

# Assessment and Improvement of the Academic Skills of Entering Freshmen Students

Please indicate your response by placing a check (✓) in the appropriate box or by supplying the appropriate information.

**1.** What is the approximate size of your usual entering freshman class?

Total number of entering freshmen _____

**2.** From the following list, rank (in order of importance) criteria used by your college in accepting students. Place the number 1 next to the most important criterion, the number 2 next to the second most important criterion, etc.

2a _____ academic record (GPA, courses taken, etc.)
2b _____ scholastic test results (SAT, ACT, etc.)
2c _____ recommendations
2d _____ interview
2e _____ interests of the student
2f-2i _____ other (please specify)_____

_____

**3.** Approximately what percentage of your usual entering freshman class is

3a White (non-Hispanic) ____ %
3b Black (not of Hispanic origin) ____ %
3c Hispanic (regardless of race) ____ %
3d Asian or Pacific Islander ____ %
3e American Indian or Native Alaskan ____ %

**4.** Approximately what percentage of your usual entering freshman class is

4a 18 years of age or younger ____ %
4b 19-24 years of age ____ %
4c 25 years of age or older ____ %

**5.** Approximately what percentage of your usual entering freshman class comes from homes where

5a English is spoken exclusively ____ %
5b both English and another language are spoken ____ %
5c only a language other than English is spoken ____ %

**6.** Approximately what percentage of your freshmen students:

6a lives on or near campus? ____ %
6b commutes regularly to campus each day? ____ %

**7.** What process is used by your college to assess the academic skills levels of entering freshmen? (check all that apply)

7a ____ no assessment made
7b ____ no assessment necessary
7c ____ previous academic records
7d ____ scholastic tests results (SAT, ACT, etc.)
7e ____ interview
7f ____ local tests administered by your college
7g ____ other (please specify) _____

_____

**8.** Overall, to what extent is poor academic preparation of entering freshmen perceived by your college as a problem?

a.) ____ very much of a problem
b.) ____ somewhat of a problem
c.) ____ not much of a problem
d.) ____ not a problem at all

IF YOU ANSWERED 8d, please proceed directly to question 18.

**9.** What percentage of your entering freshman class requires help in the following *basic skill* areas

9a Reading____%
9b Writing____%
9c Mathematics____%
Other (please specify)
9d _____ ____ %
9e _____ ____ %
9f _____ ____ %

**10.** In column A, check each area in which your college offers courses to students who need help in that area. In column B, indicate if the course is mandatory.

| | A | B |
|---|---|---|
| Reading | 10A1 | 10B1 |
| Basic writing | 10A2 | 10B2 |
| Basic mathematics | 10A3 | 10B3 |
| Other (please specify) | 10A4-10A6 | 10B4-10B6 |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

11. If tests are used to determine placement into these courses, list the name of commercial tests used in each area (if college designed tests are used please so indicate) and the minimum level of performance for exemption from remediation

| | Test(s) | Minimum Level of Performance for Exemption from Remediation |
|---|---|---|
| 11a Reading | | |
| 11b Basic writing | | |
| 11c Basic mathematics | | |
| Other (as listed in Question 10) | | |
| 11d | | |
| 11e | | |

12. If measures other than tests are used to determine placement in these courses please indicate what they are.

| | |
|---|---|
| 12a Reading | |
| 12b Basic writing | |
| 12c Basic mathematics | |
| Other (as listed in Question 10) | |
| 12d-12f | |
| | |

13. Are courses available specifically for students who are not proficient in English *because* English *is not* their native language?

_____Yes _____ No _____Not Applicable

14. If you have assessed that freshman students need help in basic skills and you have chosen not to address these needs through formal courses, what learning modes have you chosen to use? (Check all that apply)

| | Pre-admission Summer Program | Counseling | Tutoring | Computer Assisted Instruction | Other (please specify and explain the program) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading | 14A1 | 14A2 | 14A3 | 14A4 | 14A5 | 14A6 |
| Basic writing | 14B1 | 14B2 | 14B3 | 14B4 | 14B5 | 15B6 |
| Basic mathematics | 14C1 | 14C2 | 14C3 | 14C4 | 14C5 | 14C6 |
| Other (as listed in Question 10) | 14D1 | 14D2 | 14D3 | 14D4 | 14D5 | 14D6 |
| | 14E1 | 14E2 | 14E3 | 14E4 | 14E5 | 14E6 |

15. For students who have been placed in basic skills courses, what measures, if any, are used to determine when their skills have been improved to the point where remediation is no longer needed?

| | Individual Teacher Judgment | Other (please specify) |
|---|---|---|
| 15a Reading | _____ | |
| 15b Basic writing | _____ | |
| 15c Basic mathematics | _____ | |
| Other (as listed in Question 10) | | |
| 15d | _____ | |
| 15e | _____ | |

16. Does your college use any measurement(s) other than grades in courses to determine whether a student moves from one level of college standing to another (e.g. from freshman to sophomore or from sophomore to junior, etc.), or as a graduation requirement?

16a _____yes _____no

If your answer to the above is "yes", please specify, which measurements are used:

16b _____

17. What has your college found to be the *most effective* way to help students with recognizable skills deficiencies maintain good academic standing? (Please discuss below)

_____

18. Name, address, telephone number, and title of person replying

_____

If you need more space to answer any of the items, please attach an additional page.

*We sincerely appreciate your completing this survey, and we thank you for your timely reply.*

# APPENDIX D

## SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES

Table D-1

RACIAL COMPOSITION OF FRESHMAN CLASS BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | N | Race: Mean % White | Mean % Black | Mean % Hispanic | Mean % Asian | Mean % American Indian |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Private University | 27 | 86.6%[a] (8.0) | 5.9% (3.0) | 2.9% (2.4) | 3.3% (3.5) | 0.4% (0.6) |
| Public University | 51 | 85.6 (16.1) | 5.5 (6.0) | 4.7 (14.4) | 2.6 (4.6) | 1.2 (1.6) |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 94 | 86.4 (19.6) | 7.4 (15.6) | 2.2 (2.6) | 1.9 (3.4) | 0.3 (0.5) |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 31 | 78.7 (18.9) | 8.4 (13.9) | 4.5 (4.1) | 4.3 (5.0) | 0.8 (0.6) |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 283 | 79.8 (27.3) | 12.3 (22.8) | 4.5 (12.3) | 1.4 (3.6) | 1.0 (4.3) |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 153 | 74.7 (31.1) | 18.1 (27.9) | 3.8 (10.7) | 1.3 (3.7) | 0.7 (1.6) |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 75 | 75.6 (27.6) | 15.0 (21.7) | 5.2 (16.1) | 1.7 (3.5) | 0.7 (3.0) |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 199 | 79.6 (25.2) | 12.9 (19.4) | 4.9 (13.3) | 1.3 (7.3) | 0.8 (2.4) |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 175 | 79.4 (21.1) | 10.3 (15.8) | 4.5 (7.7) | 2.5 (9.5) | 2.5 (9.5) |
| Total | 1088 | 80.0% (25.2) | 12.1% (20.6) | 4.3% (11.2) | 1.8% (5.8) | 1.1% (4.8) |

[a]The number in parentheses is the standard deviation.

Table D-2

AGE COMPOSITION OF FRESHMAN CLASS BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | N[a] | % ≤18 Years Old | N[a] | % 19-24 Years Old | N[a] | % 25+ Years Old |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Private University | 22 | 91.3% (8.0)[b] | 22 | 15.7% (28.1) | 21 | 1.1% (2.0) |
| Public University | 47 | 65.0 (29.2) | 46 | 29.4 (24.1) | 48 | 6.1 (7.8) |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 88 | 81.3 (28.8) | 79 | 17.5 (27.1) | 79 | 3.0 (8.4) |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 32 | 67.7 (28.4) | 33 | 29.8 (28.1) | 33 | 4.7 (5.8) |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 266 | 66.9 (33.7) | 259 | 26.1 (28.8) | 260 | 7.9 (12.4) |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 140 | 61.6 (31.8) | 136 | 28.6 (25.4) | 137 | 9.7 (12.3) |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 76 | 58.4 (32.2) | 75 | 29.6 (23.9) | 76 | 12.4 (13.3) |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 185 | 39.0 (28.1) | 184 | 34.1 (18.6) | 186 | 27.5 (19.6) |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 168 | 24.0 (22.1) | 168 | 40.0 (17.6) | 168 | 36.7 (19.0) |
| Total | 1024 | 55.2% (34.8) | 1002 | 29.2% (25.0) | 1008 | 16.2% (18.9) |

[a]The number of institutions varies across categories because not all institutions responded to all portions of the question.

[b]The number in parentheses is the standard deviation.

Table D-3

DISTRIBUTION OF INSTITUTIONS WITH LARGE AND SMALL PROPORTIONS OF THE ENTERING FRESHMAN CLASS REQUIRING HELP IN BASIC SKILLS AREAS BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Institution | % of Institutions with ≤10% of Freshmen Needing Help | | | % of Institutions with ≥50% of Freshmen Needing Help | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Reading | Basic Writing | Basic Mathematics | Reading | Basic Writing | Basic Mathematics |
| Private University | 80.0% (20)[a] | 70.0% (20) | 52.9% (17) | 0.0% (20) | 0.0% (20) | 0.0% (17) |
| Public University | 48.6 (37) | 34.9 (43) | 31.8 (44) | 2.7 (37) | 7.0 (43) | 4.6 (44) |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 59.7 (62) | 35.9 (78) | 44.6 (65) | 4.8 (62) | 7.7 (78) | 9.2 (65) |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 39.1 (23) | 18.8 (32) | 12.0 (25) | 0.0 (23) | 12.5 (32) | 0.0 (25) |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 27.8 (230) | 22.3 (251) | 30.8 (244) | 9.1 (230) | 13.2 (251) | 14.3 (224) |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 23.0 (135) | 14.3 (140) | 15.9 (138) | 16.3 (135) | 17.9 (140) | 23.2 (138) |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 24.6 (65) | 28.8 (66) | 19.1 (68) | 13.8 (65) | 12.1 (66) | 19.1 (68) |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 16.3 (190) | 12.6 (190) | 12.0 (191) | 16.8 (190) | 17.9 (190) | 23.0 (191) |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 16.3 (153) | 16.6 (145) | 13.4 (149) | 19.0 (153) | 23.5 (145) | 26.2 (149) |
| Total | 27.0% (915) | 21.3% (965) | 21.9% (921) | 12.7% (915) | 15.2% (965) | 18.3% (921) |

[a]The number in parentheses is the number of cases on which the percentage is based. For example, of the 20 private universities, 80.0% feel that 10% or less of the entering freshmen need help in reading.

Table D-4

DISTRIBUTION OF INSTITUTIONS WITH LARGE AND SMALL PROPORTIONS OF THE ENTERING FRESHMAN CLASS REQUIRING HELP IN BASIC SKILLS AREAS BY PERCEIVED EXTENT OF PROBLEM

| Perceived Extent of Problem | % Of Institutions with ≤ 10% of Freshmen Needing Help | | | % Of Institutions with ≥ 50% of Freshmen Needing Help | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Reading | Basic Writing | Basic Math-ematics | Reading | Basic Writing | Basic Math-ematics |
| Very Much of a Problem | 8.3% (327)[a] | 5.9% (338) | 4.8% (334) | 28.4% (327) | 30.2% (338) | 34.8% (334) |
| Somewhat of a Problem | 30.2 (516) | 22.2 (545) | 24.7 (514) | 5.6 (516) | 8.7 (545) | 10.5 (514) |
| Not Much of a Problem | 71.9 (96) | 63.6 (110) | 64.3 (98) | 0.0 (96) | 3.6 (110) | 1.0 (98) |
| Not a Problem at All | [b] (2) | [b] (2) | [b] (3) | [b] (2) | [b] (2) | [b] (3) |
| Total | 26.9% (941) | 21.3% (995) | 21.9% (949) | 13.1% (941) | 15.4% (995) | 18.0% (949) |

[a]The number in parentheses is the number of cases on which the percentage is based. For example, of the 327 institutions perceiving poor academic preparation of entering freshmen to be very much of a problem, 8.3% feel that less than 10% of the entering freshmen need help in reading.

[b]There are too few institutions in this category to calculate a meaningful percentage.

Table D-5

## METHODS USED TO ASSESS ACADEMIC SKILLS LEVELS OF ENTERING FRESHMEN BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | N | Percentage Using Methods of Assessment | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | None Made | Necessary | Previous Record | Scholastic Test Results | Interview | Locally Administered Tests | Other |
| Private University | 29 | 3.5% | 17.2% | 65.5% | 82.8% | 24.1% | 44.8% | 3.5% |
| Public University | 52 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 71.2 | 88.5 | 23.1 | 71.2 | 7.7 |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 95 | 0.0 | 4.2 | 83.2 | 88.4 | 33.7 | 72.6 | 10.5 |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 34 | 2.9 | 0.0 | 55.9 | 82.4 | 11.8 | 67.7 | 14.7 |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 288 | 2.1 | 0.4 | 79.9 | 86.8 | 33.0 | 75.7 | 9.4 |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 156 | 2.6 | 1.9 | 61.5 | 88.5 | 14.7 | 67.3 | 10.3 |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 75 | 1.3 | 0.0 | 70.7 | 65.3 | 40.0 | 74.7 | 9.3 |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 205 | 3.9 | 0.5 | 50.7 | 63.4 | 28.9 | 80.0 | 11.2 |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 182 | 7.7 | 2.8 | 55.0 | 51.7 | 29.7 | 79.1 | 15.4 |
| Total | 1116 | 3.2% | 1.8% | 66.0% | 75.5% | 28.3% | 74.3% | 10.8% |

Table D-6

METHODS USED TO ASSESS ACADEMIC SKILLS LEVELS OF ENTERING FRESHMEN BY PERCEIVED EXTENT OF PROBLEM

| Extent of Problem | N | Percentage Using Methods of Assessment | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | None Made | None Necessary | Previous Record | Scholastic Test Results | Interview | Locally Administered Tests | Other |
| Very Much of a Problem | 378 | 3.7% | 1.1% | 55.3% | 67.2% | 25.9% | 81.0% | 12.2% |
| Somewhat of a Problem | 615 | 3.4 | 0.8 | 68.5 | 77.6 | 28.3 | 75.9 | 11.4 |
| Not Much of a Problem | 129 | 2.3 | 0.8 | 76.7 | 85.3 | 27.9 | 62.0 | 7.0 |
| Not a Problem at All | 37 | 5.5 | 27.0 | 67.6 | 62.2 | 35.1 | 37.8 | 8.1 |
| Total | 1159 | 3.4% | 1.7% | 65.1% | 74.6% | 27.7% | 74.8% | 11.0% |

Table D-7

SERVICES OTHER THAN COURSES[a] PROVIDED IN READING
BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | N | Percentage Offering Service in Reading | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Pre-Admission Summer Program | Counseling | Tutoring | Computer Assisted | Lab | Other |
| Private University | 12 | 58.3% | 58.3% | 75.0% | 16.7% | 16.7% | 0.0% |
| Public University | 19 | 42.1 | 57.9 | 89.5 | 21.1 | 10.5 | 0.0 |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 49 | 26.5 | 46.9 | 73.5 | 4.1 | 12.2 | 16.3 |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 16 | 50.0 | 43.8 | 75.0 | 0.0 | 25.0 | 6.3 |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 112 | 20.5 | 54.5 | 84.8 | 8.9 | 9.8 | 8.9 |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 58 | 44.8 | 62.1 | 86.2 | 19.0 | 13.8 | 6.9 |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 22 | 27.3 | 59.1 | 95.5 | 4.6 | 9.1 | 4.6 |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 64 | 32.8 | 46.9 | 82.8 | 39.3 | 15.6 | 3.1 |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 61 | 24.6 | 55.7 | 90.2 | 43.4 | 9.8 | 9.8 |
| Total | 413 | 30.8% | 53.8% | 84.3% | 13.8% | 12.4% | 7.8% |

[a]The question asked the institutions to indicate the learning modes which are used to address the basic skills needs of students, if they have chosen not to address these needs through formal courses. However, because very few of the institutions do not offer courses and most of the institutions responding to the question do offer courses, we decided to retain and present all of the reported information.

Table D-8

SERVICES OTHER THAN COURSES[a] PROVIDED IN BASIC WRITING BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | N | Percentage Offering Service in Basic Writing: Pre-Admission Summer Program | Counseling | Tutoring | Computer Assisted | Lab | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Private University | 12 | 58.3% | 50.0% | 75.0% | 8.3% | 25.0% | 8.3% |
| Public University | 26 | 38.5 | 46.2 | 88.5 | 15.4 | 11.5 | 3.9 |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 50 | 32.0 | 44.0 | 86.0 | 0.0 | 16.0 | 12.0 |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 15 | 53.5 | 40.0 | 86.7 | 0.0 | 26.7 | 6.7 |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 111 | 29.7 | 53.2 | 87.4 | 9.0 | 9.9 | 8.1 |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 61 | 42.6 | 57.4 | 83.6 | 18.0 | 16.4 | 1.6 |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 21 | 23.8 | 66.7 | 85.7 | 4.8 | 4.8 | 9.5 |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 66 | 31.8 | 40.9 | 86.4 | 15.2 | 15.2 | 7.6 |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 58 | 22.4 | 51.7 | 89.7 | 17.2 | 12.1 | 6.9 |
| Total | 420 | 33.1% | 50.2% | 86.4% | 11.2% | 13.6% | 6.7% |

[a]The question asked the institutions to indicate the learning modes which are used to address the basic skills needs of students, if they have chosen not to address these needs through formal courses. However, because very few of the institutions do not offer courses and most of the institutions responding to the question do offer courses, we decided to retain and present all of the reported information.

Table D-9

SERVICES OTHER THAN COURSES[a] PROVIDED IN BASIC MATHEMATICS BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | N | Percentage Offering Service in Basic Mathematics: Pre-Admission Summer Program | Counseling | Tutoring | Computer Assisted | Lab | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Private University | 12 | 50.0% | 58.3% | 83.3% | 16.7% | 0.0% | 83.0% |
| Public University | 26 | 38.5 | 50.0 | 88.5 | 19.2 | 3.9 | 3.9 |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 41 | 36.6 | 46.3 | 85.4 | 9.8 | 7.3 | 7.3 |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 15 | 60.0 | 40.0 | 86.7 | 6.7 | 26.7 | 0.0 |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 106 | 28.3 | 50.0 | 87.7 | 12.3 | 6.6 | 5.9 |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 60 | 36.7 | 55.0 | 88.3 | 21.7 | 11.7 | 3.3 |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 25 | 16.0 | 64.0 | 88.0 | 8.0 | 4.0 | 8.0 |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 69 | 33.3 | 40.6 | 89.9 | 20.3 | 14.5 | 2.9 |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 59 | 27.1 | 54.2 | 88.1 | 22.0 | 8.5 | 6.8 |
| Total | 413 | 32.7% | 50.1% | 87.9% | 16.2% | 9.2% | 5.1% |

[a]The question asked the institutions to indicate the learning modes which are used to address the basic skills needs of students, if they have chosen not to address these needs through formal courses. However, because very few of the institutions do not offer courses and most of the institutions responding to the question do offer courses, we decided to retain and present all of the reported information.

Table D-10

PLACEMENT INTO BASIC SKILLS COURSES: NONTEST MEASURES[a]

| Placement Measures | Reading | Basic Writing[b] | Basic Mathematics |
|---|---|---|---|
| High School Grades | 42.6% | 45.9% | 56.2% |
| Faculty Referral | 41.5 | 40.4 | 31.4 |
| Student Request | 15.9 | 13.7 | 12.4 |
| Total | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| N | 176 | 183 | 194 |

[a]This table is restricted to institutions which mentioned measures other than tests for placement into basic skills courses.

[b]When institutions specified samples in response to question 12, they were coded as writing samples in the question on tests used for placement into courses (question 11). We limited valid responses to question 12 to measures which did not require the student to use paper and pencil specifically for placement into courses.

Table D-11

PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONS[a] USING TESTS FOR PLACEMENT INTO BASIC SKILLS COURSES BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | Reading | | Basic Writing | | Basic Mathematics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % Offer[b] | % Mandatory[c] | % Offer[b] | % Mandatory[c] | % Offer[b] | % Mandatory[c] |
| Private University | 68.6% (16)[d] | 83.3% (6) | 81.0% (21) | 90.0% (10) | 77.8% (18) | 88.9% (9) |
| Public University | 67.7 (37) | 100.0 (8) | 77.1 (48) | 87.5 (24) | 84.1 (44) | 100.0 (15) |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 54.9 (51) | 86.7 (15) | 68.4 (79) | 74.5 (47) | 62.1 (58) | 82.6 (23) |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 56.0 (25) | 87.5 (8) | 90.9 (33) | 100.0 (22) | 75.9 (29) | 100.0 (9) |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 76.0 (225) | 82.9 (117) | 76.3 (261) | 80.7 (186) | 69.8 (232) | 79.9 (139) |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 74.1 (139) | 96.6 (58) | 81.1 (148) | 92.9 (85) | 79.2 (144) | 91.0 (78) |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 78.3 (60) | 94.1 (34) | 66. (65) | 279.5 (39) | 64.7 (68) | 75.0 (36) |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 86.2 (195) | 95.2 (83) | 81.6 (190) | 90.7 (97) | 79.9 (199) | 94.3 (87) |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 78.5 (177) | 90.6 (53) | 74.0 (173) | 78.0 (59) | 71.0 (179) | 80.8 (52) |
| Total | 76.3% (925) | 90.8% (382) | 76.9% (1018) | 84.5% (569) | 73.6% (971) | 85.7% (448) |

[a]This table is restricted to institutions offering courses in the skills areas.

[b]The percentages in this column represent the institutions offering courses in the skills area. For example, 68.6% of the private universities which offer reading courses use tests for placement into the reading courses.

[c]The percentages in this column represent the institutions deciding to make skills courses mandatory, based on those offering courses. For example, 83.3% of the private universities which offer reading courses and make them mandatory use tests for placement into the reading courses.

[d]The number in parentheses is the number of cases on which the percentage is based. For example, of the 16 private universities which offer reading courses, 68.6% use tests for placement into the reading courses.

Table D-12

MOST COMMONLY USED TESTS TO PLACE STUDENTS IN READING COURSES
(N=747)[a]

| Test[b] | N | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Nelson Denny: | | |
| Alone | 215 | 28.8% |
| With another instrument | 21 | 2.7 |
| Total | 236 | 31.5 |
| Locally Developed: | | |
| Alone | 146 | 19.5 |
| With another instrument | 6 | 0.8 |
| Total | 152 | 20.3 |
| American College Testing Program: | | |
| Alone | 53 | 7.1 |
| With another instrument | 28 | 3.7 |
| Total | 81 | 10.8 |
| Scholastic Aptitude Test - Verbal: | | |
| Alone | 38 | 5.1 |
| With another instrument | 17 | 2.2 |
| Total | 55 | 7.3 |
| Comparative Guidance and Placement: | | |
| Alone | 45 | 6.0 |
| With another instrument | 2 | 0.2 |
| Total | 47 | 6.2 |
| State Developed: | | |
| Alone | 32 | 4.3 |
| With another instrument | 4 | 0.5 |
| Total | 36 | 4.8 |
| Descriptive Tests of Language Skills: | | |
| Alone | 25 | 3.3 |
| With another instrument | - | - |
| Total | 25 | 3.3 |
| California Achievement Test: | | |
| Alone | 23 | 3.1 |
| With another instrument | - | - |
| Total | 23 | 3.1 |
| McGraw-Hill Basic Skills: | | |
| Alone | 22 | 2.9 |
| With another instrument | - | - |
| Total | 22 | 2.9 |

[a]This table is restricted to institutions mentioning tests for placement into reading courses.

[b]Only tests used by at least 20 institutions are included.

Table D-13

MOST COMMONLY USED TESTS TO PLACE STUDENTS
IN BASIC WRITING COURSES
(N=826)[a]

| Test[b] | N | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Locally Developed: | | |
| Alone | 343 | 41.5% |
| With another instrument | 22 | 2.6 |
| Total | 365 | 44.1 |
| American College Testing Program: | | |
| Alone | 82 | 9.9 |
| With another instrument | 45 | 5.4 |
| Total | 127 | 15.3 |
| Scholastic Aptitude Test - Verbal: | | |
| Alone | 42 | 5.1 |
| With another instrument | 56 | 6.7 |
| Total | 98 | 11.8 |
| Writing Sample:[c] | | |
| Alone | 44 | 5.3 |
| With another instrument | 52 | 6.4 |
| Total | 96 | 11.7 |
| Test of Standard Written English: | | |
| Alone | 35 | 4.2 |
| With another instrument | 27 | 3.2 |
| Total | 62 | 7.4 |
| Comparative Guidance and Placement: | | |
| Alone | 35 | 4.2 |
| With another instrument | 9 | 1.1 |
| Total | 44 | 5.3 |
| State Developed: | | |
| Alone | 32 | 3.9 |
| With another instrument | 8 | 0.9 |
| Total | 40 | 4.8 |

[a]This table is restricted to institutions mentioning tests for placement into basic writing courses.

[b]Only tests which are used by at least 20 institutions are included.

[c]Tests for placement into basic writing courses were coded as writing samples if the institution specified writing samples in response to either question 11 or 12.

Table D-14

MOST COMMONLY USED TESTS TO PLACE STUDENTS
IN BASIC MATHEMATICS COURSES
(N=755)[a]

| Test[b] | N | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Locally Developed: | | |
| Alone | 374 | 49.5% |
| With another instrument | 19 | 2.5 |
| Total | 393 | 52.0 |
| American College Testing Program: | | |
| Alone | 77 | 10.2 |
| With another instrument | 38 | 5.0 |
| Total | 115 | 15.2 |
| Scholastic Aptitude Test - Math: | | |
| Alone | 45 | 5.9 |
| With another instrument | 33 | 4.3 |
| Total | 78 | 10.2 |
| State Developed: | | |
| Alone | 37 | 4.9 |
| With another instrument | 3 | 0.4 |
| Total | 40 | 5.3 |
| Comparative Guidance and Placement: | | |
| Alone | 37 | 4.9 |
| With another instrument | 3 | 0.4 |
| Total | 40 | 5.3 |

[a]This table is restricted to institutions mentioning tests for placement into basic mathematics courses.

[b]Only tests used by at least 20 institutions are included.

Table D-15

EXIT CRITERIA FOR BASIC SKILLS COURSES[a]

| Exit Criteria | Reading | Basic Writing | Basic Mathematics |
|---|---|---|---|
| Faculty Judgment | 43.2% | 51.0% | 45.0% |
| Post Test Scores | 14.0 | 10.2 | 11.4 |
| Course Grades | 7.0 | 7.3 | 9.4 |
| Faculty Judgment & Test | 20.0 | 16.0 | 15.0 |
| Faculty Judgment & Grades | 7.0 | 7.0 | 8.0 |
| Overall GPA | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.4 |
| Total | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| N | 977 | 1077 | 1269 |

[a]This table is restricted to institutions which offer courses in the basic skills area and specified exit criteria.

Table D-16

PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONS USING TESTS AS EXIT CRITERIA FROM BASIC SKILLS COURSES[a] BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

| Type of Institution | Reading | Basic Writing | Basic Mathematics |
|---|---|---|---|
| Private University | 41.3%<br>(14)[b] | 15.8%<br>(19) | 25.0%<br>(16) |
| Public University | 34.6<br>(26) | 28.2<br>(39) | 28.6<br>(35) |
| Private 4 Year: Selective | 25.0<br>(36) | 18.8<br>(69) | 27.7<br>(47) |
| Public 4 Year: Selective | 26.3<br>(19) | 21.2<br>(33) | 23.1<br>(26) |
| Private 4 Year: High School | 34.1<br>(208) | 24.4<br>(242) | 25.6<br>(203) |
| Public 4 Year: High School | 42.6<br>(122) | 37.8<br>(135) | 37.7<br>(130) |
| Private 2 Year: High School | 42.9<br>(56) | 30.4<br>(56) | 28.8<br>(59) |
| Public 2 Year: High School | 43.3<br>(187) | 35.7<br>(182) | 35.0<br>(183) |
| Public 2 Year: Open Admissions | 36.3<br>(168) | 31.4<br>(159) | 30.0<br>(169) |
| Total | 37.6%<br>(836) | 29.6%<br>(934) | 30.6%<br>(859) |

[a]Each column of this table is restricted to institutions which offer courses in the specific basic skills area and specified exit criteria. Tests can be used alone or in combination with other criteria.

[b]The number in parentheses is the number of institutions responding to the question. For example, of the 14 private universities which offer reading courses, 41.3% use tests as exit criteria, either alone or in combination with teacher judgment.